

Message Text

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SUBJECT: REPORT ON SOVIET AIRCRAFT BOMBING SOVIET DESTROYER,
NOVEMBER 1977

REF: USNATO 2467 (DTG 051659Z)

1. TRANSMITTED BELOW IS TEXT OF ARTICLE "MUTINY ON SOVIET DESTROYER," GOTABORG-POSTEN, MARCH 21, 1976:

2. BEGIN QUOTE: LAST NOVEMBER THERE WAS A MUTINY ONBOARD ONE OF THE SOVIET UNION'S MOST MODERN DESTROYERS. THIS OCCURRED OUTSIDE THE GULF OF RIGA. THE SHIP ATTEMPTED TO GET AWAY OUT INTO THE BALTIC BUT IT WAS STOPPED BY OTHER NAVAL VESSELS AND AIRCRAFT. PROBABLY THE MUTINEERS HAD IN MIND TO MAKE FOR SWEDEN, WEST GERMANY OR DENMARK. THERE HAVE BEEN VARIOUS RUMORS CONCERNING THE INCIDENT, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE NATO COUNTRIES. IT WAS NOT UNTIL RECENTLY, HOWEVER, THAT ANY CLEAR PICTURE OF WHAT OCCURRED HAS EMERGED.

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3. ACCORDING TO FRAGMENTARY INFORMATION THAT LEAKED

OUT FROM THE BALTIC COUNTRIES, THE MUTINY TOOK PLACE ON A "GUARD VESSELS," I.E., A TYPE OF SMALL PATROL BOAT. A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FACTS, MEANWHILE, INDICATES THAT IN FACT IT WAS A LARGE WARSHIP THAT WAS INVOLVED, APPARENTLY ONE OF THE SOVIET'S MOST MODERN DESTROYERS.

4. THE MUTINY OCCURRED ON THE NIGHT OF THE 8TH/9TH OF NOVEMBER LAST YEAR. THE 7TH NOVEMBER IS THE OFFICIAL DATE FOR CELEBRATING THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION. IT IS NOT KNOWN IF THE REVOLUTION CELEBRATIONS GAVE THE MUTINEERS THEIR CHANCE TO SEIZE THE SHIP AND MAKE FOR THE WEST, NEITHER IS IT KNOWN JUST HOW MANY OF THE CREW PARTICIPATED.

5. ACCORDING TO CERTAIN PRESS REPORTS, IT WAS THE "POLITruk," I.E., THE POLITICAL OFFICER ON BOARD AND HIS ASSISTANTS WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE. THIS SEEMS HARDLY LIKELY HOWEVER. A NUMBER OF OFFICERS ARE NEEDED TO GET A SHIP TO SEA AND COPE WITH THE NAVIGATION, ETC. IT QUITE CERTAINLY WAS NOT SUFFICIENT AT THE TIME TO SIMPLY "LOCK UP THE CAPTAIN," AS CERTAIN RUMORS ASSERTED.

6. THE DESTROYER SLIPPED OUT OF RIGA UNOBSERVED UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS, MAKING OFF INTO THE GULF OF RIGA ON AN UNKNOWN COURSE. THE MUTINEERS HAD COVERED A FEW NAUTICAL MILES IN THEIR SHIP BEFORE THE ALARM WAS SOUNDED. SOMEONE ASHORE OR ON ANOTHER VESSEL IN RIGA PORT HAD BECOME SUSPICIOUS SINCE NO ORDERS HAD BEEN ISSUED FOR LEAVING PORT.

7. SUSPICIOUS WERE PRACTICALLY CONFIRMED WHEN THE SHIP DID NOT REPLY TO RADIO SIGNALS.

8. A TREMENDOUS OPERATION WAS NOW SET IN MOTION. OTHER DESTROYERS, VARIOUS TYPES OF ESCORT VESSELS AND PROBABLY EVEN A CRUISER, WERE ORDERED OUT OF RIGA AND OTHER SOVIET NAVAL BASES. FIRST OUT MEANWHILE WERE PURSUIT AND ATTACK AIRCRAFT, ARMED WITH AUTOMATIC GUNS, ROCKETS, AND MISSILES.

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9. THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO STOP THE REBEL DESTROYER WAS MADE BEFORE DAWN ON THE 9TH, USING AIRCRAFT. BY THEN THE SHIP HAD ALREADY PASSED THE IRBEN SOUND BETWEEN THE ISLAND OF OSEL AND THE MAINLAND, ON A WESTERLY COURSE ON HER WAY OUT OF THE SOVIET UNION'S 12 NAUTICAL MILE TERRITORIAL WATERS.

10. ONE CAN IMAGINE WHAT WENT ON THAT GREY MORNING: THE

AIRCRAFT WENT IN AT LOW LEVEL, FIRING WITH THEIR AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, WHILE THE DESTROYER ZIGZAGGED EVASIVELY. THERE IS NO INDICATION, MEANWHILE, THAT THE DESTROYER USED ITS OWN WEAPONS TO DEFEND ITSELF, WHICH ALSO SUGGEST THAT THE ENTIRE CREW WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE MUTINY.

11. WHEN THE AUTOMATIC FIRE HAD NO EFFECT, ATTACK AIRCRAFT WERE USED, DROPPING BOMBS. PROBABLY THE DESTROYER, UNDER-MANNED, WAS UNABLE TO USE HER FULL SPEED RESOURCES AND NEITHER COULD SHE BE MANEUVERED AS EFFECTIVELY AS SHOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITH A COMPLETE, WELL-TRAINED CREW.

12. A DIRECT HIT BY AN AIRCRAFT'S BOMB OR MISSILE WOULD HAVE DAMAGED THE SHIP SERIOUSLY, OR EVEN SUNK HER. AND THEN WHEN THE OTHER SHIPS INVOLVED ALSO REACHED THE PLACE OF THE ACTION, THE MUTINY WAS CONFORNTED WITH OBVIOUS FAILURE. THE MUTINEERS GAVE UP.

13. THE DESTROYER WAS BOARDED AND TAKEN BACK TO A SHELTERED ANCHORAGE SOMEWHERE IN THE GULF OF RIGA. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO THE EFFECT THAT SHE WAS SERIOUSLY DAMAGED IN ANY WAY BUT THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A HEAVY EXCHANGE OF FIRE SINCE ONE OF THE SHIPS WHICH TOOK PART IN THE CASE, PROBABLY A RIGA-CLASS FRIGATE, WAS SUBSEQUENTLY OBSERVED TO HAVE SUFFERED SEVERE DAMAGE, WHICH COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY A BOMB HIT OR AN INTERNAL EXPLOSION. AN EXPLANATION HERE CAN BE THAT ONE OF THE ATTACK AIRCRAFT MISTOOK THE IDENTITY OF THE FRIGATE IN THE HALF-LIGHT AND ATTACKED IT INSTEAD OF THE REBEL DESTROYER.

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14. THE WORLD AT LARGE WILL PROBABLY NEVER LEARN THE TRUTH OF WHAT HAPPENED HERE. THERE IS EVERY INDICATION THAT SWIFT MEASURES WERE TAKEN TO KEEP THE WHOLE THING QUIET, WHICH SENTENCES WERE PASSED AND MEN WERE RE-ASSIGNED SO THAT NOTHING OF THE SORT WOULD HAPPEN AGAIN.

15. IT IS EVIDENT ENOUGH, MEANWHILE, THAT THERE ARE DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS IN THE RED FLEET. VARIOUS ARTICLES HAVE DEALT WITH THIS SUBJECT DURING 1974 AND 1975, INCLUDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOVIET NAVY'S OWN MAGAZINE KRASNAYA ZVEZDA. ON CHRISTMAS EVE THE DESTROYER "STOROZHEVOY" WAS MENTIONED BY NAME AND THE AUTHOR OF THE ARTICLE SPOKE OF LACK OF POLITICAL INSTRUCTION ON BOARD. SINCE THEN OTHER WRITERS HAVE REFERRED TO

DISCIPLINE PROBABLEMS AND SLACKNESS IN THE SOVIET FLEET.
THERE HAVE EVEN BEEN SUGGESTIONS OF SABOTAGE. END QUOTE.
SMITH

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